



NATALE ELDERS

CULTURAL

Diversity

NCCAT seminars bridge gaps

Amy Lunsford of Stovall, who teaches at Stovall-Shaw Elementary, practices Spanish with Armando Trivino of Murfreesboro, originally from Ecuador, who teaches at Riverview Elementary.

By Zach Laminack

North Carolina's classrooms are becoming a diverse mix of cultures, languages, and nationalities; and as school systems race to adapt, teachers often are caught in a whirlwind of programs and initiatives. NCCAT's cultural diversity seminars are designed to lend a hand to teachers, providing a collegial space for discussion, consideration, reflection, and most importantly, change.

Change was the theme for two recent seminars, "Our New Neighbors: Latinos in North Carolina," held in March, and "Young, Black, and Male in America," held in April. As with most NCCAT seminars, teachers returned to their schools with a shared experience, one that fosters camaraderie and contributes to the foundations of a network of professionals built from similar experience—one of the center's chief goals.

As the stories of these two seminars came together, common experiences surfaced from a common goal—to expand awareness of the diverse and changing needs of all students. Whether they came to NCCAT to discuss

how to help their students who speak English as their second language or to unravel the perplexing problem of low graduation rates of African American students, the teachers were drawn together by desire to find out "why," and figure out "how."

Language barrier becomes learning opportunity

Understanding and interpreting the diverse cultures represented in our schools is growing increasingly difficult. To assist teachers in bridging cultural gaps, the seminar "Our New Neighbors: Latinos in North Carolina," introduced participants to the culture of Latino students through an exploration of their cultural norms and nuances, as well as art, music, and history. Teachers also took an in-depth look at the complexities of immigration laws and why and how people immigrate to the United States.

To help teachers better understand the desire to seek a better life and the difficulties immigrants face, Mauricio

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TERRI CLARK

Guest presenter Tavares Stephens, an English teacher at Morrow High School in Rex, Georgia, has developed successful programs for mentoring African American students.

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Villa, Asheville chef and businessman, shared his experience of crossing the border from Mexico. “We were deeply moved by his personal story of struggle and the challenges he faced in his new country,” said Center Fellow Jane Dalton, who led the seminar.

Throughout the week, teachers were instructed in basic Spanish language skills to assist them in the classroom and in communication with Latino parents. Native speakers from Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Cuba, Colombia, and Venezuela joined participants, providing an opportunity for them to practice their new language skills in a supportive environment.

Teachers were able to gain some experience navigating the differences and nuances of dialects spoken in each country through ten-minute one-on-one conversations with native speakers. “Practicing their language skills put the teachers in their students’ seats, and asked them to face the challenge of communicating ideas in their non-native language,” said Dalton.

Implementing change

A recurring NCCAT seminar, “Young, Black, and Male in America,” held in April, invited teachers to consider cultural differences while learning and adapting teaching strategies designed to reach all of their students, particularly young African American males, whose high school dropout rates mark a disturbing trend nationwide.

“Of all the African American students in ninth grade today, less than 50% will graduate from high school,” said Center Fellow Dr. Ernest Johnson. “That’s a crisis for North Carolina, and we want to do our part to find solutions.”

The recent NCCAT seminar addressed questions of the roots and magnitude of the crisis for black males in America, how to view issues of guilt and responsibility, and

how educators can best address the crisis in classrooms, schools, and communities. Teachers often need advice on how to motivate students who have been offered limited access, expectations, and resources, Johnson said.

The focus of the seminar, he pointed out, was not to dwell on problems or concentrate on the alarming statistics, but rather to move forward. “We wanted to provide a safe place to talk about the crisis in order to affect real change, to find out what works, what doesn’t, and what teachers can use in their classrooms to motivate these students,” he said. In addition to attending sessions conducted by outstanding presenters, the teachers had ample opportunities to learn from each other and to discuss various strategies they already are using in their schools for motivating students.

In a recent survey sent to teachers who have participated in NCCAT seminars on motivating African American students, Johnson found encouraging results. Sixty-three percent are using more books and resources written by African Americans, fifty-three percent are using poetry jams as a way to increase interest in writing, and thirty-seven percent report starting a mentoring program in their schools or communities.

Upcoming cultural awareness seminars at NCCAT include

- “Our New Neighbors: Latinos in North Carolina” (August 13–17)
- “From Africa to Appalachia: Celebrating the History of the Banjo,” (September 26–30)
- “Celebrating Diversity Through Art,” (September 26–30)
- “Best Practices for Motivating African American Students” (December 3–7).

For more information, visit NCCAT on the web at www.nccat.org or contact Dr. Ernest Johnson via e-mail at johnsone@nccat.org or Jane Dalton at daltonj@nccat.org.

Golden LEAF and NCCAT Sharing strategies for national certification

Teachers who have achieved the high distinction of national certification are valuable resources for their schools and communities. Thanks to funding support from the Golden LEAF Foundation, NCCAT is helping the North Carolina network of nationally certified teachers grow and flourish.

In addition to a series of support seminars for teachers seeking national certification, NCCAT has organized facilitators' institutes around the state. During these institutes groups of teachers who have earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards get tips that help them strengthen their talents for mentoring other teachers in their districts who are just starting the rigorous, year-long certification process. During the one-day institutes, the nationally certified teachers share successful ideas and plan strategies for taking up-to-date information about national certification to their home districts. These one-day institutes, held this spring in Louisburg and Edenton, were organized by Mary Kay Cooley of the NCCAT faculty.



CHRISTY MCCARLEY

NCCAT Center Fellow Mary Kay Cooley (far left) works with nationally certified teachers who are helping other teachers with the certification process. The teachers are (clockwise from left): Judy Lassiter, Ann Williams, Marsha Timberlake, Lois Edwards, and Cyndi Carpenter.

Delving into DNA

As a part of the April seminar "Crime Scene Investigator: The New Sherlock Holmes," participants discovered a simulated airplane crash in a wooded area behind the center's main conference building. The teachers-turned-investigators set out to discover details under the guidance of seminar faculty, including forensic anthropologist Dr. Bill Bass of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, made famous by his work at UT's Anthropological Research Facility, known widely as "the body farm."

Bass and other seminar leaders presented forensic practices used by investigators to unravel crimes, including crash-reconstruction techniques and techniques used to identify victims from their skeletal remains.

The teachers also practiced DNA profiling with the help of the University of North Carolina's mobile science lab, nicknamed "Destiny." On board the lab, which traveled to Cullowhee to serve as a science and technology resource for the seminar, the teachers studied DNA samples taken from the "crime scene" as a final step towards solving the week's mystery.

The seminar activities were designed to give teachers hands-on experience with emerging and exciting scientific techniques that can be taken back to the classroom.



TERRI CLARK



Ocracoke GRAND OPENING set October 20

NCCAT Director of Operations Laurin Baker (right) reviews samples of furnishings for the Ocracoke campus, which will open this summer, with Virginia Politano of Durham, a member of the Board of Trustees, during the joint spring meeting of the trustees and the foundation Board of Directors held in April in Cullowhee. The history and heritage of the eastern North Carolina campus and its new life as an education center for teachers will be celebrated during grand opening ceremonies to be held there October 20.

Featuring conference and meeting facilities, dining services, and rooms for teachers attending seminars,

the Ocracoke campus will enable NCCAT to serve more teachers in year-round programming, especially teachers who live and work in eastern North Carolina. Located in fully renovated buildings formerly occupied by the U.S. Coast Guard, the campus is situated prominently at the shoreline of Silver Lake Harbor in historic Ocracoke Village.

The main campus building is the old Coast Guard station house, one of the island's coastal landmarks, and its historic appearance has been preserved. The shoreline that borders the campus along the Pamlico Sound will be restored to marshland. This project serves both to protect against erosion and to create an area that will serve as a natural site for coastal environmental seminars for teachers.

Foundation appoints two new members

Two prominent North Carolinians, Anthony Foxx of Charlotte and Linda Suggs of Morrisville, have been named to the Board of Directors of the Development Foundation of NCCAT Inc.

"We are fortunate to have these two exceptional new members," said Richard



Schwartz, foundation president. "Anthony Foxx hails from a long line of educators, and has a real heart for teaching. Linda Suggs' concern for improving education is unparalleled as she has worked tirelessly throughout her career to ensure a quality education for every child in North Carolina."

Foxx received a law degree from New York University School of Law and has experience as a trial attorney for the Department of Justice. He has been involved in public service throughout his career and currently serves as a Charlotte City Council member and chair of the council's new environment committee.



Suggs, who holds a master's degree from Duke University, has served public education at many levels, from middle school teaching and curriculum supervision to human resources and government relations. She retired from state service in 2006 and now works as an educational consultant. Her chief client is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation of Seattle, Washington.

Board members hear updates on expansion

During the April meeting of the Board of Trustees and its foundation's Board of Directors, Dr. Mary McDuffie, executive director, told members that NCCAT is responding to the statewide issue of teacher retention through expanded programs of support and encouragement. "NCCAT's programs renew and revitalize the teachers of North Carolina. Our mission responds to a critical need across our nation—keeping caring and skilled faculties in our schools."

Continuing the center's mission to provide cutting edge programming that enriches and renews teachers professionally, plans for the upcoming year call for almost 8,000 teachers to attend the full array of activities, from weekend meetings and conferences to five-day residential seminars. Programs are expanding to respond to professional development needs at all stages of a teacher's professional life, McDuffie said.

For beginning teachers, NCCAT's "Connections" programs focus on best practices in teaching and bringing together the new teachers with experienced mentor teachers to share classroom concerns and solutions. The purpose of the program, supported with a grant from the Wachovia Foundation Teachers and Teaching Initiative, is to reduce the attrition rate in selected school districts, especially low-wealth districts where teacher attrition is particularly high.

For teachers who have been teaching three years or more, the center provides a full spectrum of seminars on topics in the arts, sciences, social sciences, humanities, and health and fitness. Support seminars for teachers seeking certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards also are offered. The support seminars have received grant funding from the Golden LEAF Foundation, Progress Energy, and State Farm Insurance. NCCAT also serves teachers after they retire through weekend "NCCAT alumni" seminars held annually.

In his remarks, Kenneth Wells of Manteo, chairman of the Board of Trustees, said, "We are encouraged by the growth at NCCAT in recent years. The staff and faculty members are constantly looking for new and exciting opportunities for teachers."

In news from the foundation, President Richard Schwartz of Raleigh said that the NCCAT Annual Fund is close to reaching its goal. The Annual Fund includes contributions from teachers who are NCCAT alumni, staff members, trustees, foundation members, and other friends and supporters.

"We are so excited about everything that has been accomplished over the past year and are even more excited about what is on the horizon. This will be an unbelievable year."

*—Richard Schwartz, President
Development Foundation of
NCCAT Inc.*

Phillip J. Kirk Jr. Scholarship endowed

The Development Foundation honored Phillip J. Kirk Jr., one of the state's best-known advocates for education, during a reception at Catawba College in Salisbury.

The occasion marked the full endowment of an Honored Educator Scholarship established at NCCAT in Kirk's name. Contributions greatly exceeded the \$25,000 level required to endow the fund in perpetuity. Former North Carolina Governor James E. Holshouser Jr. and former Senator Howard N. Lee, chairman of the State Board of Education, were among the speakers at the event.

A native of Rowan County, Kirk is vice-president of external relations at Catawba College. For sixteen years, he was president and chief executive officer of North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry and publisher of *North Carolina* magazine. A public school teacher early in his career, he later served for more than five years as chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education. He was elected to the state legislature in 1970, becoming one of its youngest members at that time. He later served as chief of staff for two North Carolina governors, Holshouser and Jim Martin; and for U.S. Senator Jim Broyhill.



Phillip J. Kirk Jr



BARBARA MACON

Teachers Charles Glass of Greenville and Veronica Black of Raleigh carry out their responsibilities on the crew of a simulated space shuttle mission.

Teachers set their sights high

A group of teachers have renewed vitality for teaching science and technology after an experience that has expanded their horizons—literally. The twenty-four “cadets” participated in “Space Camp: Your Place in Space” held in March at the United States Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. The NCCAT seminar provided participants with a firsthand introduction to the wonders of space travel.

While at Space Camp, the teachers learned about the history and science of space exploration, and participated in a mission simulation that gave each one a role. Their mission helped them hone their leadership and teamwork skills through exercises that drew on their physical abilities and mental acumen. Several commented that the exposure

to rocket science helped them to better understand the perplexity their students sometimes experience when tackling a difficult assignment.

After the simulations, the teachers designed, built, and tested heat-shield tiles for the space shuttle and experimented with the science of propulsion. They also conducted experiments in physics and motion, using materials that would be readily available to them and their students at grocery and hardware stores back home.

Though participants have reached the age of accepting that they probably won’t ever be on a real space flight, they realize that may not be such a far-fetched idea for their students. NCCAT’s Director of Programming Dr. Renée Coward, who developed the Space Camp seminar, reminded them that with the rapid advances in technology, anything is possible.

“As a child, my grandmother never dreamed she would fly across the sky in airplanes,” she said. “But in the span of her lifetime, she did. Why shouldn’t we expect that children today will be traveling in spaceships during their lifetimes?” The ultimate goal of the seminar she added “is to help teachers realize the boundless possibilities of the future and our responsibility as teachers to help our students gain the skills to face the future with confidence.”

At week’s end the teachers’ sentiment summed it all up: mission accomplished.



MARK HASKETT

*“I can tell you without a doubt that all the astronauts have had one or more great teachers of math and science who inspired them to look to their futures,” said Ed Buckbee (right) of Huntsville, Alabama. The director emeritus of the United States Space and Rocket Center, Buckbee was the guest speaker during joint spring meetings of the Board of Trustees and its foundation’s Board of Directors held in April. Shown here signing copies of his book, *The Real Space Cowboys*, for Linda Suggs of Morrisville, and Donna Wells of Manteo, he has served as a guest presenter for NCCAT’s science seminars.*

Outdoor classrooms

"For if one link in nature's chain might be lost, another might be lost, until the whole of things will vanish by piecemeal."

Those words spoken by Thomas Jefferson more than 200 years ago set the theme for "Bringing Back the Wild: Wildlife Recovery in North Carolina," an April seminar that focused on the delicate balance of North Carolina's mountain ecosystems.

During their five-days together, the group formed a learning community focused on gathering the resources they need to inspire a greater environmental consciousness among their students. The twenty-five participants reviewed the history of wildlife from 18,000 years ago up to the present day, while they learned the reasons for the extinction of some species, whether from climate change, predatory, or human influences.

The seminar was designed to give the participants the latest information on wildlife preservation efforts and why they are important. Visiting presenters came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and the Elk Management Project of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which the teachers visited to learn about North Carolina's highly successful reintroduction of that species into a natural habitat.

Many of the participants already were avid environmentalists and were pleased to have resources and information to take back to their students. "I came back to school with a lot of wonderful information for my kids," said Jamie Barnhill, kindergarten teacher at Forest View Elementary in Durham. "I want to make sure they understand the importance of our environment, and the lessons that nature teaches us. I want them to know how important they are going to be in finding solutions for our environmental issues."



SANDRA HOWLING

In Cullowhee, teachers make molds of wildlife tracks from real-life casts to take back to their schools.



LIEGH FURMAN

In Durham, teacher Jamie Barnhill and instructional assistant Gaynell Davis take kindergarten students on a field trip.



Gala will be September 8

The second Golden Apple Gala and Silent Auction, a black-tie fundraising event held by the Development Foundation of NCCAT Inc. for the support and advancement of NCCAT's professional development programs for teachers,

will be held on Saturday, September 8, in Raleigh's Capital City Club. The first Gala, held in February of 2006, raised over \$60,000. For those interested in attending, tickets for the event are \$125 per person or \$250 per couple. Highlights will include a silent and live auction with items ranging from European vacations, to Lasik surgery, golf outings, fine jewelry, and much more. Information is available from Development Director David Lilly or Development Associate Greg Bauguess at 828-293-5202.

Changing coastline is seminar topic

Orrin Pilkey (left), marine geologist and professor emeritus at Duke University, explains barrier island migration and the impact of sea level rise and coastal storms to teachers Carolyn Charles of Asheville and John Cox of Cullowhee. Pilkey, Charles, Cox, and other teachers were at Portsmouth Island, an uninhabited island south of Ocracoke. Pilkey has published widely during his career and is the author of *How To Read a North Carolina Beach*. He served as a visiting presenter for the NCCAT seminar, "Sea, Sand, and Human Hands: the Changing Face of the Outer Banks," held in April on the North Carolina coast.

NCCAT • SUMMER NEWSLETTER • Volume 20 • Number 3 • July 2007

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Published by: The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching
276 NCCAT Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723

Phone: 828-293-5202 Toll Free: 800-922-0482 Fax 828-227-7363.

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching is a center of the University of North Carolina.

Dr. Mary D. McDuffie, Executive Director
An Equal Opportunity Institution

25,500 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$3,577 or \$0.14 per copy

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Advancement of Teaching***
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Cullowhee, NC 28723

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